

John W. Lainhart IV
Inspector General

Office of Inspector General
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-9990

MEMORANDUM

TO: Wilson Livingood
Sergeant at Arms

FROM: 
John W. Lainhart IV
Inspector General

DATE: February 13, 1997

SUBJECT: Audit Report - Parking Operations Would
Benefit From Further Improvements (Report No. 97-SAA-01)

This is our final report on parking operations within the U.S. House of Representatives. The objective of this audit was to evaluate the effectiveness of House parking operations. In this report, we found that House Garages and Parking Security operations have significantly improved during the 104th Congress. However, we identified additional improvements that would further benefit parking operations and made specific recommendations for corrective actions.

In response to our January 2, 1997 draft report, your office concurred with our finding and recommendations. The January 8, 1997 management response is incorporated in this final report and included in its entirety as an appendix. The corrective actions taken and planned by your office are appropriate and, when fully implemented, should adequately respond to the recommendations.

We appreciate the courtesy and cooperation extended to us by your staff. If you have any questions or require additional information regarding this report, please call me or Robert B. Frey III at (202) 226-1250.

cc: Speaker of the House
Majority Leader of the House
Minority Leader of the House
Chairman, Committee on House Oversight
Ranking Minority Member, Committee on House Oversight
Members, Committee on House Oversight

PARKING OPERATIONS WOULD BENEFIT FROM FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

The operations of House Garages and Parking Security (Parking) have significantly improved during the 104th Congress. Employee duties were expanded and enhanced after Parking operations were moved from the Architect of the Capitol (AOC) to the Office of the Sergeant at Arms (SAA)--resulting in a more professional attitude and increased employee morale. The SAA also established formal written policies and procedures which provide guidance to Parking personnel. Furthermore, the SAA has acquired some additional equipment to assist employees in performing their duties. Parking has also expanded the services available to Members and staff. However, parking operations would benefit from further improvements.

Background

On May 23, 1995, the Committee on House Oversight (CHO) adopted Parking Regulations and agreed to transfer operational and financial responsibility for House Parking to the SAA, effective July 1, 1995. The U.S. House of Representatives (House) provides approximately 6,000 parking spaces to Members and staff. Staff are defined as employees of the House, AOC, United States Capitol Police (USCP), and non-House employees who are regularly detailed to work assignments in the House. Parking is responsible for the management, safety, and security of vehicles and pedestrians in all House garages and parking lots on Capitol Hill. To manage the parking requirements of the House, Parking maintains a computerized database of individuals and vehicles authorized for parking. Parking also issues both permanent and temporary parking permits and stickers.

Parking personnel enforce all parking rules and regulations established by the CHO. Parking personnel also identify and correct problems on the premises and assist Members and staff with vehicle emergency service. In addition, they assist the USCP with security control for all House garages and parking lots.

Objective, Scope, And Methodology

The objective of our audit was to evaluate the effectiveness of Parking operations. We identified and evaluated operations through (1) interviews with Parking personnel; (2) reviews of pertinent policies and procedures; (3) observations of operations; and (4) reviews of management reports. Our audit covered the period November 1995 through October 1996 and was conducted in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

Internal Controls

During this review, we evaluated internal controls over Parking operations. The internal control weakness we identified is described in the *Results of Review* section of this report.

Prior Audit Coverage

Opportunities Exist To Improve Resource Utilization In The Office Of The Sergeant At Arms (Report No. 95-SAA-14, dated July 18, 1995). This audit reviewed parking operations and determined that (1) inadequate controls resulted in multiple parking permits being issued to single vehicles; (2) House Parking staff levels led to overstaffing; and (3) wages were excessive relative to the private sector. The audit report recommended that (1) parking permits be assigned by a unique unalterable identifier such as the House employee identification (ID) number, to ensure that only one parking permit is issued per employee; (2) staffing levels be reduced; and (3) wages be more reflective of the private sector or additional duties be assigned. The SAA has completed action on the last two recommendations and is currently working with the House Identification Office to obtain ID numbers of the individuals in the parking database in order to complete action on the first recommendation. However, this process cannot be completed until IDs for the 105th Congress are issued. (The Exhibit at the end of this report provides a summary of the implementation status of each of the three recommendations.)

II. RESULTS OF REVIEW

The overall operations of Parking have significantly improved since its transfer to the SAA. Specifically, the SAA has (1) expanded and enhanced staff duties resulting in a more professional attitude and increased employee morale; (2) enacted formal, written policies and procedures which provide guidance to Parking personnel; (3) acquired additional equipment; and (4) developed a holographic hang tag for use in the 105th Congress. However, we identified certain areas where additional improvements could be made.

SAA Improvements

Expanded and Enhanced Staff Duties

During the 104th Congress, the SAA expanded the duties of Parking personnel to include responsibility for the security of vehicles and pedestrians within all House garages and parking lots. Prior to the transfer of parking operations from the AOC, Parking personnel functioned simply as parking lot attendants. The staff did not wear uniforms and were not trained in security measures. To equip Parking personnel for this expanded role, the SAA provided training and uniforms. In addition, the SAA instituted roll calls and security patrols to better manage and report on individual officer performance. As a result of these actions, the House parking environment is now very security oriented.

Additional training now provided to Parking personnel includes such security related areas as bomb detection and identification of suspicious activities. Parking personnel also received--or are scheduled to receive--training in CPR, fire safety, and computer applications. Furthermore,

the Parking personnel are now required to wear a standard uniform. As a result of this improvement, Parking personnel now look and act more professional.

All personnel are required to report to their respective shift's roll call, where work instructions and relevant information about internal policies and other activities is disseminated. This daily roll call was initiated by the SAA and helps management better assign and locate personnel. Currently, Parking personnel patrol the garages and lots periodically and record any violations in a *Daily Garage and Lot Report* which is maintained by each shift. In addition, a log is maintained which documents any problems that occur (i.e., vehicle break-ins, incidents involving the Congressional License Tag, etc.). The log book also documents each time assistance is given. A shift supervisor compiles a monthly report based on the log book and gives this information to the Parking Director. This information is included in a quarterly report submitted to the SAA.

Developed Written Policies and Procedures

Parking has developed formal written policies and procedures which provide Parking personnel with operational guidance. These policies and procedure include lot and garage responsibilities, shift hours, roll call procedures, annual and sick leave policies, uniform requirements, and other administrative matters. In addition, these policies provide examples of parking permits, the *Daily Garage and Lot Report*, and the *Daily Garage and Lot Violation Notice* for easy reference by Parking personnel. The existence of written policies and procedures is an important internal control which provides Parking personnel information on their duties and responsibilities and the expectation of management.

Acquired Additional Equipment

As part of the SAA's new focus on House security, Parking purchased additional security equipment. One major improvement was the acquisition of two-way radios. Since most of the existing parking lots do not have telephones, the addition of two-way radios allows Parking personnel to notify supervisors of problems and be able to call for assistance. In addition, battery booster packs have been obtained to jump-start vehicles. Although the SAA should be commended for these efforts, additional equipment is still needed. (See discussion below, under the caption *Additional Improvements Can Still Be Made.*)

Developed a Holographic Hang Tag

Starting with the 105th Congress, Parking will issue holographic hang tags instead of parking stickers. Parking stickers were difficult to affix to the bumpers of newer cars and their removal sometimes caused damage to bumpers. In addition, the sticker, or a substantial portion, was required to be returned to Parking before a new one could be issued, and sometimes it was difficult to remove a sticker or even a significant portion of a sticker. The holographic tag is a removable permit which can be hung from a vehicle's inside mirror. Also, the holograph is difficult to counterfeit, thus minimizing unauthorized access to the House garages and lots.

Additional Improvements Can Still Be Made

Although the SAA has vastly improved parking operations during the 104th Congress, additional improvements can still be made. Parking rules are not uniformly enforced regarding: (1) Congressional License Tags; (2) positive identification for admittance to garages and lots; and (3) parking by former Members. Other areas of concern are controls over pedestrian traffic, lack of posted speed limits in the garages and parking lots, and the need for additional equipment and more uniform advertising of expanded services.

Congressional License Tags

According to Parking personnel, there is frequent abuse of the Congressional License Tag, commonly referred to as the “H” plate. The “H” plate is a portable, rectangular plate provided to each Member, and serves as his or her parking permit. According to the *Committee On House Oversight Policy, Rules And Operating Regulations For Parking* (the *Parking Rules*), dated May 23, 1995, parking permits are for the use of the permit holder only and are non-transferable. A Member is automatically given one “H” plate, which comes out of his or her parking space allotment. The Member may also request a second “H” plate for a spouse, which does not count against this allotment. Staff are supposed to use the “H” plate only when accompanied by a Member. However, Parking personnel indicated that Members’ staff often use the “H” plate even when the Member isn’t present. Staff may use this plate to park in a location other than their assigned one. For example, a staff member may be assigned to the Rayburn garage but will use the “H” plate to park in the Cannon garage because it is more convenient. Parking personnel will not normally stop an unaccompanied staff member in possession of an “H” plate from parking in a garage or lot. However, according to both the Assistant Director of Parking and a shift supervisor, if this activity occurs three to four times, the attendant will inform Parking management who then contacts the offending staff to discuss the situation. If this activity persists, Parking management will contact the Member’s chief of staff in order to correct the problem. As part of our review, we toured the Cannon garage and found several examples of cars with “H” plates that were parked in reserved spots. The Shift Supervisor explained that the individuals who had parked there were in violation of House policy because they were not assigned to these particular spots.

Besides using the “H” plate to park in a more convenient location, staff sometimes use the “H” plate to help others gain improper access to a garage or lot. The staff will enter a parking facility with the “H” plate, park, remove the plate, and give it to another individual who, in turn, uses the plate to park. During patrols of the parking facilities, Parking personnel may notice that a parked vehicle has no parking sticker. If they are unfamiliar with the vehicle and cannot identify the owner, they notify the USCP who run the license plate through a national computer database. If the vehicle remains unidentified, the police will close off the surrounding area and bring in a K-9 unit and/or the bomb squad to do a sweep of the vehicle. Although this happens rarely--twice during the last ten months--it is an unnecessary disruption of, and potential security threat to, parking operations. The *Parking Rules* provide that unattended vehicles found inside a garage without a sticker, and which cannot be identified by the registry maintained by the Superintendent of Garages (now the Director of Parking), and whose driver cannot be quickly located, will be immediately towed or booted. However, this is not uniformly enforced.

Although CHO policy dictates that permits are not transferable, Parking supervisors indicated that they would be uncomfortable in bringing such a problem to the attention of a Member.

Positive Identification for Admittance to Garages and Parking Lots

Most garages and parking lots have signs stating that an ID must be shown for admittance. In order to determine if this policy was consistently enforced, we attempted to gain unauthorized entrance to several parking facilities. In parking facilities where the attendant on duty did not recognize us, we were asked to show an ID. Conversely, we found that individuals with whom a Parking officer was familiar would be allowed entrance without being asked for an ID. To reduce any familiarity which might relax standards and policies, best practices dictate that Parking personnel be rotated from post to post. We were told that Parking has no formal policy on the rotation of personnel, and that personnel were relocated only to meet temporary staff shortages. Parking officials also explained that they wanted to keep the more senior people inside the garages and to maintain the same personnel assignments that existed prior to the SAA taking over Parking. In addition, they noted that, on occasions where attendants had been relocated, Members complained because they felt more comfortable with individuals they already knew.

Parking by Former Members

Former Members have the privilege of parking in the garages and lots at any time without first obtaining authorization from Parking. Consequently, there may be no identifying mark on the vehicle, e.g., a sticker or temporary permit. Although picture identification is required to access a parking facility, shifts change and the individual who allowed the former Member to enter may no longer be on duty. Therefore, a problem regarding unidentified vehicles in a garage (similar to the “H” plate problem discussed above) may arise. A requirement that former Members obtain temporary parking permits could alleviate this problem.

Controls Over Pedestrian Traffic

We identified a problem with pedestrian traffic entering garages. Since there is no central pedestrian entrance, pedestrian traffic can be a distraction to the Parking personnel on duty. To illustrate this problem, we switched IDs among ourselves and attempted to enter a garage. We showed the IDs at a distance of about 50 feet and were cleared through. However, if we had been required to enter at a specific point adjacent to the security booth, the Parking officer would likely have realized that the IDs had been switched.

Lack of Posted Speed Limits

House parking facilities do not always have posted speed limits. Parking management stated that although there is no formal policy regarding speed limits, it is “assumed” to be 20 to 25 miles per hour (mph). However, the entrance to the Rayburn, East, and West garages have a posted speed limit of 10 mph. According to the USCP, the Cannon garage had a speed limit sign but it disappeared. One speed limit should be formally established and prominently posted on each level of all garages and each parking lot.

Additional Equipment Needed

Parking has a 1981 van which does not have the height clearance to enter the lower levels of the garages and, therefore, covers a limited territory. According to personnel, having one van (particularly an older model) makes it difficult for Parking to perform all of its duties timely. Currently, the SAA loans two of its vehicles (from other SAA operations) to Parking. These vehicles have low clearance and are police-equipped, which helps Parking carry out its duties. However, the SAA can retrieve these vehicles at any time. In order to maximize security in garages and parking lots, Parking should have its own permanently assigned, police-equipped vehicle(s).

More Uniform Notification of Emergency Services

The SAA has expanded the emergency services provided by Parking. As part of their duties, Parking personnel provide emergency assistance to Members and staff. Such assistance includes jump-starting cars, changing flat tires, opening inadvertently locked cars, and escorting individuals to and from parking lots. Although we noted that numerous individuals have used these services, notification of the availability of these services is accomplished through informal communication (i.e., word of mouth) rather than on a more uniform, House-wide basis. In some cases, individual attendants may personally inform the people who park in their garages and lots about these services. However, according to one Shift Supervisor, there is no formal notification process. These are important services, benefiting all Members and staff, which should be more widely communicated.

Recommendations:

We recommend that the Office of the Sergeant at Arms:

1. Direct Parking management to more uniformly enforce established *Parking Rules* regarding the proper use of Congressional License Tags and displaying of positive identification for admittance to garages and lots.
2. Develop a proposal, for approval by the Committee on House Oversight, to require former Members to obtain temporary parking permits.
3. Review whether central pedestrian entrances for garages are feasible.
4. Establish an official speed limit for all parking facilities which is uniformly posted and enforced.

5. Identify additional equipment requirements for Parking operations and, if appropriate, develop a proposal, for approval by the Committee on House Oversight, to purchase such equipment.
6. Provide uniform notification of the emergency services provided by Parking operations.

Management Response

On January 8, 1997, the SAA concurred with the recommendations in this finding. The Director of House Garages and Parking Security is working with the Committee on House Oversight to address uniform enforcement of Parking Rules, requiring former Members to obtain temporary parking permits, and the feasibility of central pedestrian entrances. In addition, the Director of House Garages and Parking Security will contact the House Building Superintendent to post speed limits for all parking facilities. At the end of the 104th Congress the SAA purchased two Cushman motorized carts for the Office of House Garages and Parking Security. The SAA has notified Member offices that emergency services are available and will provide this same information to the House Officers.

Office of Inspector General Comments

The SAA's current and planned actions are responsive to the issues we identified, and when fully implemented, should satisfy the intent of our recommendations.

Status Of Implementation Of Prior Audit Report Recommendations

Audit Report/Recommendations	Implementation Status	Comments on Corrective Actions Taken And/Or Planned	Scheduled Date of Completion
Audit Report No. 95-SAA-14, entitled <i>Opportunities Exist To Improve Resource Utilization In The Office Of The Sergeant At Arms</i>, dated July 18, 1995:			
B. Prepare a proposal, for approval by the CHO, to revise House Parking facilities staffing in accordance with garage and lot peak and non-peak activity levels.	Fully	A study was conducted to determine parking lot peak and non peak activity resulting in the elimination of one third of the positions.	Not applicable
C. Develop a proposal to place House Parking personnel under the House Employee Schedule at a rate that more closely reflects private industry standards or assign them additional duties.	Fully	House parking personnel were transferred to SAA. The positions are basically entry level law enforcement. This is at the lowest pay scale (approximately \$14,000 - \$30,000 range) with an average of \$18,000. This transfer occurred about one year ago.	Not applicable
D. Assign parking permits by a unique, unalterable identifier--such as the House employee ID number--to ensure that only one parking permit is issued per employee.	Partially	SAA is in the process of developing new parking permits which are basically color coded hanging tags. The tags are printed on both sides and contain holographic data. The tags must be hung from the rear view mirror.	At the start of the 105 th Congress

BILL LIVINGOOD
SERGEANT AT ARMS

APPENDIX JIM VAREY
Page 1 of 2 DEPUTY SERGEANT AT ARMS

Office of the Sergeant at Arms
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6634
January 8, 1997

TO: John W. Lainhart IV
Inspector General
U.S. House of Representatives

FROM: Honorable Bill Livingood *WJL*
Sergeant at Arms
U.S. House of Representatives

SUBJECT: Draft Audit Report – Parking Operations Would Benefit
From Further Improvements

In response to the January 2, 1997, Draft Audit Report on House Garages and Parking Security covering the period November 1995 through October 1996, I submit the following written comments, as requested, on the findings and recommendations in the report.

1. *Direct Parking management to more uniformly enforce established Parking Rules regarding the proper use of Congressional License Tags and displaying of positive identification for admittance to garages and lots.*

The Director of House Garages and Parking Security is working with the Committee on House Oversight regarding this recommendation.

2. *Develop a proposal, for approval by the Committee on House Oversight, to require former Members to obtain temporary parking permits.*

I concur with the recommendation. The Director of Garages and Parking Security is working with the Committee on House Oversight regarding this recommendation.

3. *Review whether central pedestrian entrances for garages are feasible.*

The Director of Garages and Parking Security is working with the Committee on House Oversight to review this recommendation.

4. *Establish an official speed limit for all parking facilities which is uniformly posted and enforced.*

I concur with the recommendation and the Office of House Garage and Parking Security Office will contact the House Building Superintendent regarding this recommendation.

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5. *Identify additional equipment requirements for Parking operations and, if appropriate, develop a proposal, for approval by the Committee on House Oversight, to purchase such equipment.*

I concur with the recommendation and two Cushman motorized carts were purchased for The Office of House Garages and Parking Security at the end of the 104th Congress.

6. *Provide uniform notification of the emergency services provided by Parking Operations.*

The Office of House Garages and Parking Security has previously notified Member offices with regard to the emergency services available to House employees. The same information will be provided to House Officers.